

Update on the Demographic Profile and Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC)

Discussant:

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Overview

- Alaska Natives and American Indians applaud the Census Bureau and its career staff for:
 - Their efforts to continue to provide accurate data essential to AIAN tribes and communities
 - Their commitment to protecting the privacy of AIAN respondents to Census surveys, which includes information that is highly sensitive and personal
 - Clearly articulating through the “Crosswalk” the proposed changes to the DHC and DDHC tables through a comparison between 2010 and 2020 in availability and geography
 - Providing transparency through tribal consultations in their ongoing efforts to strike the right balance between accuracy and privacy
 - Their improvements in application of differential privacy to DHC data, especially compared to earlier demonstration data sets

Two major funding areas for AIAN communities that require accurate DHC data

- Federal programs supporting families and children (Floencia Gutierrez and Iheoma Iruka will discuss some of these programs)
- Federal programs for Indian housing and community development that use:
 - DHC and DDHC data from the decennial Census (AIAN status, sex, age, housing tenure, vacancy status)
 - Income estimates from the ACS and economic surveys to identify low- and moderate-income families

Availability of DHC data identified in the 2020 Census Data Product Planning Crosswalk (“the Crosswalk”)

- We appreciate the Census Bureau’s proposal to make many of the basic data characteristics available in the DHC at the ***block level***, the lowest level of Census geography (Proposed Tables P1 – P16i)
- Includes data characteristics such as:
 - Race
 - Hispanic origin
 - Sex by selected age categories
 - Median age
 - Household type

Examples of three areas of concern for AIAN populations

- Proposed reduction of certain DHC tables in the 2020 Census Data Product Planning Crosswalk (“the Crosswalk”) and the proposed geography level for certain tables in the Crosswalk
- Data may be less accurate in less populous AIAN communities
- The need for Census staff to present information on differential privacy and its impact through explanations that are easier to understand by tribal leaders and the general public

Availability of DHC data identified in the Crosswalk

- We appreciate the Census Bureau making AIAN data of a single race a priority in tables proposed to be released in the Crosswalk
 - Many federal block grant programs are tied more directly to AIAN of a single race, so the availability of this data in the DHC tables is needed
 - This is a widely used data set among Tribal Governments
- However, the proposal not to release AIAN data for two or more races in the tables in the Crosswalk will have a negative impact on tribes that rely upon that data (in tribal areas in which there is a greater prevalence of a multi-racial AIAN population)

Availability of DHC data identified in the Crosswalk

- We also are concerned with the proposal in the Crosswalk to make much of the DHC data available in the 2010 Census at the block level at the ***County level*** in the planned 2020 DHC release
 - Tables PCO1 through PCO11, PCO19A through PCO19 I, etc.
 - The utility of those DHC tables is greatly diminished because most tribes need it a much lower level (place, if at all possible)

Accuracy of DHC data identified in the Crosswalk

- Application of differential privacy continues to have its greatest negative impact at the lowest level of Census geography, including block and place
- While we applaud Census staff for reducing the average error for AIAN of a single race by nearly two-thirds in the 3/2022 demonstration data compared to the 10/2019 demonstration data, it does not tell the whole story
 - That average error is at the County level
 - Places and blocks in tribal areas continue to experience an unacceptably high error rate, which negatively impacts those communities

More meaningful tribal consultations are needed

- Tribal officials and organizations appreciate the efforts by Census staff to conduct tribal consultations throughout the process of evaluating the impact of differential privacy on 2020 data sets
- However, Census presentations have been at too high of a level to make them understandable to those attending the consultations
 - The presentations lack a discussion of the impact on programs on which tribal governments and tribal citizens rely
 - Has resulted in a lack of feedback from tribal participants who have not received an understandable explanation from Census staff

Two proposed solutions for tribal consultations

- Continue to schedule tribal consultations to obtain feedback on 2020 Census data products and differential privacy
- Implement the recommendations made by the NAC at the March 2022 special meeting to make the Census Bureau's communications and consultations more effective

Comments and Committee Discussion

